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Psychiatric Assessment of Cases with Self-inflicted Poisoning in a Sample of Egyptian Children and Adolescents

H.H.R. El Rafei¹, N. Shaker¹, A.F.A.F. Abdel Samiee¹, M.O.N.A. Mansour¹, H.A.N.Y. Gamaluddin², M. Ghanem¹

¹Neuropsychiatry Department, Psychiatric Institute Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt ; ²Forensic and Toxicology Department, Forensic and Toxicology Department Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

Introduction:

Suicide in children and adolescents is commonly under-reported and studied. It is an interplay area of multiple static (socio-demographic), and modifiable (impulsivity, psychiatric morbidities, adverse life events (ALE), abuse, bullying) variables.

Objectives and Aim:

To assess and identify relative significance of dependent and independent risk factors in youngsters attempting self-inflicted poisoning.

Methods:

Consecutive recruitment of patients aged 7-18, with normal IQ, admitted to poison control center over 13 continuous months, with self-induced poisoning. All were assessed after guardians' written informed consent for different risk factors identified for suicidal behavior using appropriate scales (Pediatric Psychiatric Sheet (PPS), Fahmy and Sherbini Social Classification Scale (FSSCS), SRRS-Y, BIS-11, J-TCI, Mini-Kid). Controls with no history of suicidal attempt were matched for age, sex and socio-demographics among their families.

Results:

A 120 cases (16.7 years \pm 1.6 SD, 91% females) and 100 controls (16.4 years \pm 1.7 SD, 90.8% females) were assessed. In cases, 90.8% were of low- middle socioeconomic status, 73.5% had previous attempt, average within 10 months, 17.5% planned their attempt, 10.8% had a witnessed attempt. Stressor within 2 days was reported in 75.9%, severe in 40%. Impulsivity was more in its cognitive, planning and motor components ($P= 0.001$ in each) among attempters. Cases scored more on Novelty seeking, Harm avoidance and Reward dependence than controls who had more persistence, self-directedness and cooperativeness. Attempters had significantly more past medical and psychiatric history ($P=0.001, 0.05$ respectively), 77.5% had a working psychiatric illness, 2% in controls.

Conclusion:

Repeated suicidal attempts were the majority, with impulsivity as a predictive risk, especially if psychiatric morbidity or ALE in youths were encountered.